



Maryland Libraries

CHOOSING THE BOOKS

**FALL
1956**

VOL. 23, NO. 3

Journal of the Maryland Library Association
and the Association of School Librarians

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MARYLAND LIBRARIES

Journal of the Maryland Library Association
and the
Association of School Librarians of Maryland

Vol. 23 No. 3

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Choosing the Books

Whatever the size of your library and its budget, it's the \$64,000 Question—this business of which books to buy and even which to accept as gifts. New buildings catch the eye, but the book stock holds the public. Whether one deliberates with the Bible on the right hand, i.e., a formal, written statement of policies, or operates by rule-of-thumb and divine inspiration, the resulting decisions must inevitably meet the impact of public opinion. How far should one bow to insistent localized demand? How does one fan out the rarely adequate budget to meet the needs from a variety of directions? On what basis does one select each individual title to the end that the whole collection has both quality and usability by the public for whom it is intended?

In this issue the librarian of a large county branch library, a children's librarian in a municipal library, two school librarians, a public librarian responsible for catering to the tastes of young adults, and the head of a college library describe some yardsticks and methods used to achieve the purposes in their areas of work. In addition, as an outgrowth of the work of M.L.A.'s Discussion Group Committee in the Spring of 1956, a bibliography on "Librarians and the Freedom to Know" offers guidance for all librarians faced with the possibility of having to defend their choices.

Published quarterly by the Maryland Library Association and the Association of School Librarians of Maryland. Dorothy W. Reeder, State Teachers College, Towson, Acting President; Edward H. Fenner, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland, Treasurer; Editorial Committee: Howard Hubbard, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Chairman; Margaret Atwood, Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, Baltimore, Maryland; Margaret Edwards, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland; Nettie Taylor, Maryland Division of Library Extension, Baltimore, Maryland; William G. Fullmer, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland, Advertising Manager; Harry Foster, Maryland Division of Library Extension, Baltimore, Maryland, Circulation Manager.

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President	Mrs. Barbara Ann Guise
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Secretary	Mrs. Martha Rowse
Treasurer	Mr. Murray Andrews

Offical Bussiness - M.L.A.

MR. MORELAND RESIGNS: Mr. George Moreland, President of the Maryland Library Association, resigned that office effective December 6, 1956. Miss Dorothy W. Reeder, Librarian of the State Teachers College, Towson, and 1st Vice President and President Elect of the Association fills out his term as Acting President.

Mr. Moreland's resignation followed his appointment as library consultant and advisor to the government of Pakistan. His duties include advising in the planning and construction of a library building at the University of Karachi and in the development of a national library, in addition to which he will act as Librarian of the University of Pennsylvania's Library of Public Administration at Karachi. During his two years' leave-of-absence from his duties as Director of the Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries, Mrs. Louise Ferguson, Assistant Director, will occupy the position of Acting Director.

RESULTS OF BALLOTING: Over 500 ballots on proposed legislation to be presented to the Maryland General Assembly were sent to the membership in December. 136 were returned with 120 voting in favor of the complete program, 5 against, 2 unmarked. The 9 remaining voters indicated their preference for individual parts of the program as follows:

Step	Ratio of Library Staff to Population	County Tax	Approval	Not Voting
1	1-9000 (minimum 4 staff members)	2¢ or equiv.	Yes 8 No 1	0
2	1-6000	3¢ or equiv.	Yes 5 No 2	2
3	1-3000	3½¢ or equiv.	Yes 3 No 4	2
	Building Fund 25¢ per capita	½¢ or equiv.	Yes 6 No 0	3

Under the heading of comments there were 7 favorable remarks, 3 unfavorable, and 2 members, while voting in favor of the whole program, expressed the feeling

that they did not know enough about it to vote with assurance. At this writing the bill is in preparation.

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT OF SPRING MEETING: The Spring Meeting has been set for Friday, April 26 and Saturday, April 27 at the Emerson Hotel in Baltimore. Speakers will include Maurice B. Mitchell, Vice President of Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Inc., who will appear at the Friday dinner meeting. Mr. Mitchell may be remembered by those who attended for his well-received talk at the A.L.A. Conference in Miami. Also at the Spring Meeting the College Section is planning three circles of information on the following subjects: archives and rare books, public relations, and faculty status for librarians. Full details of the program will be forthcoming shortly.

NOMINEES FOR 1957-58 OFFICES: Members of the Maryland Library Association will soon be asked to vote on the following slate prepared by the Nominating Committee:

For 1st Vice President and President Elect:

Miss Sarah F. Cockey, Book Services Librarian, Baltimore County Public Library, Towson, Md.

Miss Isobel Lynch, Branch Librarian, Pimlico Branch, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Md.

For Corresponding Secretary:

Miss Johann L. Klick, Librarian, Patterson Park Jr.-Sr. High School, Baltimore, Md.

Mrs. Karen O. Larsen, Serials Cataloger, Johns Hopkins University Library, Baltimore, Md.

For Treasurer:

Miss Martha W. Stovall, Chief Librarian, U.S. Veterans Administration Hospital, Perry Point, Md.

Miss Rebecca E. Weant, Assistant, Reference Department, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Md.

The Nominating Committee consists of Miss Mae Graham, Chairman, Miss Dorothy Nicodemus, and Miss Margaret Lough.

ON BEHALF OF RECRUITING

MARYLAND COUNCIL OF STUDENT LIBRARY CLUBS MEETING, MONDAY, MARCH 25

9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.—Followed by Reception for New Members and
Informal Dance

GYMNASIUM, HOOD COLLEGE, FREDERICK, MD.

LUNCHEON, COBLENTZ HALL—\$1.00

Featured Speakers: Dr. Margaret Wehler, former Supervisor of Branch Libraries, New York Public Library; Miss Mae Graham, Supervisor of School and Children's Libraries, Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Library Extension.

Luncheon reservations with check should be sent to Miss Mary Thomas, Treasurer, M.C.S.L.C., Frederick High School, Frederick, Md.

Governor McKeldin will issue a proclamation declaring Monday, March 25

"SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DAY"

The Enoch Pratt Free Library: General Library Objectives and Objectives of Selection

Is a written statement of policy necessary? For some librarians, perhaps, a statement in black-and-white may seem too binding, the semantics involved too risky or inadequate to meet the diversity of questions which arise from day to day. For the Pratt Library, such a document seemed desirable and in 1950 a written statement of policy in selection for adults was published, followed by one for children and for young adults. Revisions are inevitable; the statement as it stands is not sacred, but by-and-large it has stood the test of time and has acted as a starting-point for other libraries in this and other states. Running to fifty-eight pages, the total text has been reproduced elsewhere, but as a starter for this issue on "choosing the books" and as an example of the principles on which one Maryland public library operates, the statement of general library objectives and the objectives of selection which grew from it are reprinted here:

GENERAL LIBRARY OBJECTIVES

"The Enoch Pratt Free Library provides, on equal terms, free service to all individuals and groups in the community, both children and adults. It accepts as its basic objectives the provision and servicing of expertly selected books and other materials which aid the individual in the pursuit of education, information, or research, and in the creative use of leisure time. Since financial limitations generally prevent equal emphasis on all aspects of these objectives, the Library recognizes that its major concern must be a positive contribution toward the removal of ignorance, intolerance and indifference.

"Educational service to adults is a primary function, and the Library pursues an active program of stimulation, leadership, and cooperation with other agencies in encouraging the reading of socially significant materials. It accepts also its responsibility for the direct communication of ideas through organization of discussion groups, institutes, film forums and the like, seeking thereby to direct the individual toward a continuous learning process through use of books and related materials. In meeting its objective of providing recreational materials it encourages such use of leisure time as will promote personal development and social well-being, and tends increasingly to leave to commercial agencies the provision of trivial, purely ephemeral materials.

"The Library, recognizing its responsibility to develop adult citizens for whom the use of books is a necessary and natural part of intelligent living, provides special service for young people and seeks to direct and stimulate young readers by making available for them an expertly selected book collection and skilled individual and group guidance.

"In provision of special services for children the Library strives to guide the child toward a love of reading and an awareness of books as a means of satisfying his mental, emotional and activity interests. Toward this end of aiding in the growth and development of the whole child, the Library works closely with parents, schools and other educational agencies, as well as with the children themselves.

OBJECTIVES OF SELECTION

"In the formulation of selection policies to implement these general objectives, the Library places major emphasis on the educational and informational functions. According to the Library's definition (based on the current broad conception of education), a book has "educational" value if it contributes to the positive growth of an individual, either as an individual or in relation to society—society in this con-

nection embracing relationships as narrow as those of the family and as broad as those of world citizenship. Including, as it does, books that broaden horizons, stimulate imagination and reflection, and enlarge experience, this definition enters into fields that a narrower one might classify as 'recreation' or 'aesthetic appreciation.'

"It will be apparent that education, by this definition, has two aspects, also reflected in book selection. Thus the Library recognizes the importance of both basic, permanent-value books, and timely, current-value materials on urgent public issues. In providing the latter it does not hesitate to purchase material in quantity for mass use and quick disposal.

"The informational function requires little definition. The Library recognizes its obligation to provide reference and research materials for the direct answering of specific questions and for research work by or in behalf of individuals, business, industry, labor, churches, professional and civic organizations, and other groups, as well as auxiliary reference works which may lead to desired information. Many works not technically reference books are also provided primarily for their information value. It is obvious that in book selection there is—and must be—a large area of overlapping between materials provided for educational and informational purposes, as defined above.*

"Within the framework of these broad objectives, selection is based more specifically on the particular needs and interests of the community. Typical of individual needs are personal development, wholesome family living, economic competence, satisfactory social relationship, citizenship responsibilities, and creative use of leisure time. The Library especially endeavors to make easily accessible to groups materials which will contribute toward the betterment of community living and relationships and general cultural development."

A Second Look at Book Selection

by MRS. MARY A. DULANY, Librarian, Bethesda Library, Montgomery County
Department of Public Libraries

Every year about this time we attempt clairvoyance in estimating demands upon our library for the coming year in terms of finance, what our budget request to our local authorities should be, what we can expect to receive, and what to do with it if and when we get it. A crystal ball could do no more. It is also an excellent opportunity for retrospection in terms of our past failures and successes in selecting books. Each year our patrons become easier to please as to quantity, if not quality, but I fear our approach is becoming that of "they'll take anything, just so it's a book." In the press of solving problems of procedure, processing, traffic, building maintenance, personnel, public relations, budgeting or circulation, it is easy to forget that books themselves are our reason for being, and inattention to our most important commodity may be disastrous.

Evaluating our present collection, I would inquire first, do the books fill the needs of our patrons as to information, education and recreation? Are they acceptably written, stimulating, attractive? Do they take into consideration specific needs of our borrowers? Is the collection well-balanced in an attempt to supply as many views as possible? Are we weeding undesirable books regularly? If we are able to answer all these questions affirmatively we can be sure many serious obstacles have been overcome, but I know of few libraries with the money or the staff vital to achieving this perfection. Maintaining a book collection in this condition requires the cooperation of many staff members, but lack of them should not

* The Library does not, of course, feel obligated to answer every question, if too obscure or specialized. In certain cases, the most satisfactory service to a reader is referral to another institution or individual.

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discourage us from setting a goal, achievement of which even in small measure makes ours a better library.

Of course the ideal in choosing books is to have every title read and evaluated before purchase. Unfortunately many of us must resort to short cuts in getting materials to the public eye. I think we do a good job on replacements, reference materials and technical publications but on current titles our methods of selection leave something to chance. We are constantly checking what we consider the standard and most reliable trade publications and even then it is possible to overlook an important title or to order an unimportant one. So great is the diversity in librarians that no two consider the same publication infallible; therefore we attempt to read as many reviews as possible whenever a doubt appears. Though few titles are reviewed and too many such periodicals review the same books, popular magazines often present a viewpoint valuable to a busy librarian. Also we have to keep a jump ahead of our readers who arrive early Monday morning with a request for all the books reviewed in the previous day's *New York Times*. We rely too on the professional publications, again limited due to lack of space. Last of all, we receive valuable recommendations from the most important source of all, the people who read our books. Keeping our eyes and ears open can teach us more about book selection than any other single technique. Out of hundreds of people who visit our library every day some are very articulate; others we ask for opinions. It is worth while to take time to find if we are giving people what they need and want, and listening to the opinion, of our readers is an excellent method of promoting good public relations. I don't think it is necessary for us to remind ourselves that in addition to other responsibilities we have an obligation to give our financial supporters their money's worth. If the day ever comes, in this time of rising costs, when we think we are succeeding, then we had better do some re-evaluation. That "saturation point" will never be reached in an aggressive, dynamic library always ambitiously planning some future project upon achievement of the present.

Short cuts that are too short are something we must guard against: reviews, that annotate but do not evaluate, "recommended reading lists" published by organizations, pressure from our readers, "best seller" lists and a list given us the other day by an eighth grade student which we considered too difficult and uninteresting for any eighth grader. The school reading lists on the whole are valuable; we have an excellent one on historical source materials for junior high school history classes, prepared with care by a teacher who has annotated and graded them and keeps the list up to date. Would that we could do as good a job. At the other extreme is a list called "Authors Acceptable for High School Reading." That is a short cut to end all short cuts.

It is important to restate and evaluate occasionally policies applied to book selection. A policy is not valid unless it is flexible enough to apply to a variety of questions through periods of change, and it should also be flexible enough to apply to individual as well as collective examples. It must set a reasonable standard and withstand attack. It must be clearly stated and non-ambiguous. Briefly, we do not buy textbooks unless that material can be found nowhere else. We do not buy readers for children. We will reject a salacious or poorly written book in deference to a discriminating public, not because we attempt to censor.

It is easy in the process of selecting books to forget for whom this is being done, and in the confusion of processing to overlook why. It is the ultimate destination of one of these books that is the single most important factor and each one of these men, women, teen-agers or children will react in his own individual manner to that certain book in a mental privacy rare in this busy world. Let television and periodicals cater to the mass interest; the library is the stronghold of the in-

dividual. The personality of our public should be the strongest influence in our choice of books so that books may bring satisfaction and happiness to all members of that public.

To Feed the Sense of Wonder

by M. VIRGINIA HUGHES, School Service Consultant, Enoch Pratt Free Library*

"May nothing fall into his hands that wastes his time, or robs him of his sense of wonder, or distorts his innate good taste. May what he reads feed that which is individual in him, and may he learn to make up his own mind about the books he reads; to discover the difference between real feeling and sentimentality; between honest excitement and violence for its own sake; between the drama of conflict inevitably resolved, and the contrived, unending action of melodrama; between real people and stereotypes in the pages of books. And may he find such companionship upon the road as he may need, when, like Boots in the fairy tale, he needs must cry out, 'Lads, lads, look what I've found.'"

This memorable credo by Frances Clarke Sayers in a 1953 speech is unending stimulation and inspiration for children's librarians everywhere. Considering the pressure of heavy schedules with apparently little time for personal reading; the clamor of multiple reviewing aids; the demands of the public, adult and children, for the flimsy, the ephemeral; tight budgets and the desire to give children "only the best," one needs the reminder of this credo for the true principles of book selection. For the words "learn to make up your own mind about the books you read," might well be substituted as a practical, essential philosophy for us all.

It is when the clock strikes three and the familiar after-school rush of children's voices and urgent requests come, that children's librarians appreciate Longfellow's reference especially to "a sudden rush from the stairway and a sudden raid from the hall." Then library philosophy as to standards, principles, and ideals, is translated into reality. It becomes all too apparent at that moment whether the book collection is suited to the community's need, whether the budget has been used to best advantage, whether the choice of titles is balanced and contains few "shelf-sitters" and many "bell-ringers."

In a large public library, the way of book selection is made easy because it is possible to *read* the book considered for purchase before ordering, and to compare its format and subject content with similar books on the same subject already on the shelves.

But what of the smaller public library which oftentimes finds itself in the position of having to rely solely on printed aids to book selection, since its volume of purchase is not sufficient to warrant free review copies from publishers? Perhaps its children's department consists of a one or two-librarian staff. Then it is a physical impossibility to achieve the goal of reviewing personally all the books desirable to buy.

The double-starred items of "The Children's Catalog" and the level-headed, consistent reviewing policy of the ALA "Booklist" are particularly valuable at this point. Other reviewing media need to be weighed and their various viewpoints and slants taken into full consideration.

But what is most urgently needed is the critical ability which the children's

* Since this writing Miss Hughes has been appointed Director of the Demonstration Library Project with the California State Library.

librarian develops in herself through constant comparing of reviews and her own reading. It is essential to form her own judgment, independent of printed reviews, and based on her own viewing of the book through children's eyes as well as her own. In the books which have brought delight through the years to children—the ones by Stevenson, Milne, Carroll, Lear, Beatrix Potter, Mark Twain, De La Mare, Andersen, Pyle—she has the best in writing to use as her measuring stick. Lillian Smith's "The Unreluctant Years" and Hazard's "Books, Children, and Men" give her unparalleled glimpses of what good writing for children can mean.

How pleasant when books are recognizably so poor in style or context or format that she can discard them with an emphatic "Terrible!" Much of today's concern, however, lies with the multitude of the mediocre. Here is where a formulated written policy issued under the library's name helps; particularly when new titles raise old questions of what to do about adding or rejecting reader and textbook material, series, abridged classics, books on junior-high age romance, careers, human relations. A practical measuring rod too is, "if this is just an average book—let's do without!"

Books for the junior teens present a special problem of selection. Newest in the publishing trends, they have still a long way to go before they reach the excellence in plot or style offered in the best of the younger children's books. If judged by those criteria, it is likely we would have none to offer the younger teen-agers. One librarian's practical suggestion for selecting in this area, particularly the romances, is, "Read at least three very quickly, one after the other. The superior one, if it's there, leaps out."

To find the "bell-ringers" for our children out of the maze of almost 1500 juvenile books published last year, and sure to be published in this and the coming years, surely we can be successful if we seek out tempting, irresistible fare for all youngsters; fare to sharpen their perceptions, stretch their ideas and their imaginations, provide them with laughter and compassion, understanding of themselves and of the world's brotherhood. And in that seeking, we must strive to build and to use our own critical evaluating ability. It is possible, then, that in our libraries we may hear a child with a book cry exultantly, "Lads, lads, look what I've found!"

The Work of a Book Evaluation Committee: Baltimore County Provides a Service For Its School Librarians

by

Marion Stoer, Librarian, Hawthorne Elementary School

and

Frances Parish, Librarian, Arbutus Elementary School

The elementary school librarians of Baltimore County, Maryland, have an active and enthusiastic book evaluation committee which has been in operation since 1952. Its members meet monthly during the school year to review and evaluate new books. From a modest start, with four or five members meeting occasionally in homes or libraries, it has proved to be so valuable a service that it has grown to twenty-two members who meet regularly in a conference room adjacent to the offices of the supervisor of library services.

From 25 to 50 or more books can be dealt with at each meeting. This gives each librarian present a valuable opportunity to become personally acquainted with a

large percentage of new books as they arrive from the publishers. Then, as much as possible of this familiarity is shared with the other county librarians by means of brief reviews and judgments formulated at the meetings and distributed in annotated lists to all of the elementary and junior high schools in the county. At present, there are 60-odd elementary schools, housing close to 40,000 children. The librarians make up their own book orders, so the committee lists are of great value to them, inasmuch as the reviews have acquired a reputation for being reliable and covering a considerable variety of new material.

In addition, supplementary lists are provided by the committee from time to time, containing bibliographies of desirable holidays books, for example, or books suitable for the enrichment of certain curriculum studies, or good "read aloud time" material for families and classrooms. The committee is always alert to find new ways to extend its scope and to improve its service.

In order to see just how this committee functions, let us describe a typical meeting. It is, in effect, an informal round table discussion. The members take turns reporting on the books they have obtained earlier in the month from the office of the supervisor. The atmosphere is friendly, relaxed, cheerful, another reason, no doubt, for the good attendance and continued earnest effort of the members. A chairman serves to keep the wheels rolling smoothly and to see that the discussion stays on the track. The individual reports are not lengthy, but when doubt is expressed as to a book's merit or suitability, other opinions are invited and a group discussion results. Sometimes, in such instances, no decision will be reached at the meeting, but the book will be passed on to another member for a second review and, it will then come up for re-consideration at some future meeting.

The usual literary criteria for book selection are carefully applied to determine whether or not a title merits recommendation. In addition, the actual physical make-up of each book is considered. Binding, print, illustrations, are noted, although mention of them is included in the printed reviews only when they are outstanding, or, conversely, unsatisfactory. For instance, when a book, is in board covers, it may be advisable to have it ordered prebound, in which case mention of this will be made in the review. As for the general criteria used in appraising the content of a book, no set rules have been made. However, members of the committee are presently engaged in a re-examination of different types of children's literature, with a view toward outlining certain desirable elements characteristic of the best examples in each area.

Fantasy, folklore, historical fiction, science fiction, and poetry are the fields being considered at present, and other types will follow. The plan is for a collation of the generally accepted standards in each case, to be used simply as a frame of reference. Although a number of specific criteria are put forward, flexibility of judgment is recognized as essential, since the function of the committee is evaluation and not censorship.

There are, of course, certain policies which influence the committee's appraisals. For example, it is always kept in mind that the libraries are for *all* the children. In order that each child may find books that nourish his individual interests at his own reading level, books for all types of readers must be considered and mention of both reading and interest level is made in the evaluation. In this respect, also, shortcomings in literary quality may on rare occasions be allowed, if a book otherwise meets a definite need and nothing better is available. This is done in recognition of the usefulness of books suitable for retarded readers. Books of this sort, as well as mill-run books which are acceptable but mediocre, may be listed as "marginal" rather than "recommended," leaving the decision up to the individual librarian as to whether the book is needed in her library. In some instances, books that are sub-standard, or books that are appropriate for high schools rather than for ele-

mentary schools, are listed as "not recommended." (The county high schools have their own book evaluation committee.)

Often, books are taken directly to the children themselves for aid in the evaluation process. Since members of the committee are all librarians or teachers, it is easy for them to enlist juvenile "previewers" and to get their reaction to a new book. For example, one librarian who was somewhat less than enthusiastic about a few of the more recent offerings of Dr. Seuss introduced "On Beyond Zebra" to several of her classes, in order to see what the children themselves thought of the book. The response was overwhelming, so the librarian amiably conceded her own opinion to be overruled.

Experiences like this are all shared at the monthly meetings. The emphasis is, of course, always on evaluation rather than on long reviews of the actual narratives or on detailed descriptions of contents. When the meeting is over, each member present has the pleasurable feeling of having participated in a job well done. As the months go by and the number of books evaluated steadily increases, the full value of the committee's work is reflected in the discrimination and taste shown in the book orders which follow. Other aids to book selection besides the committee's lists are used, of course, but the county librarians proudly testify to the importance of the work of their evaluation committee. Better informed staffs and many a fine book collection bear witness to its influence. Best of all is the fruitage noted in the satisfaction expressed by teachers and parents in the caliber of the school libraries and the happiness of the children themselves as they browse contentedly in that greenest of all pastures: the open-shelved library well-stocked with books thoughtfully selected to meet the needs and desires of each child's inquiring mind.

Some Principles of Book Selection for Young Adults

by MRS. MARGARET A. EDWARDS

Coordinator of Work with Young Adults, Enoch Pratt Free Library

Any merchant who buys stock for his store studies his community first, and before he goes to market plans in what proportions he will buy red calico and dacron, Bermuda shorts and coveralls, Cracker Barrel cheese and Camembert. So the librarian who buys books for young adults senses the interests and needs of the youth of his community.

For the reluctant readers, the young adult librarians buys teen-age romances, sport and science fiction stories, and simple adventures, all of which teach young people to love reading and show them that the interests and problems of teen-agers in books are identical with their own. Many people are unduly concerned about these books. They say that the characters are not well enough developed, that the endings are too happy, and literary style is remarkable by its absence. To some extent all of these charges may be admitted, yet most of the books are wholesome. They offer the teen-ager help with many problems he faces, and they do convince those shy of books that reading is fun. Some of the books in this field are stupid and silly, but any experienced librarian can select those that throw light on the problems of young people and give them a wholesome good time in the bargain. The teen-age stories are tools. If they do not lead to good adult reading, the fault lies all too often with the librarian who does not interest the reader in better reading at the right time. Teen-age books, whether they deal with sports, science fiction, adventure, or romance should be selected as are other books, for a plausible, true-to-life story, believable characters, and appeal for the potential reader.

For the accelerated reader forming his own philosophy there are adult titles that throw clear light on the process of living and point to the brotherhood of all

men. Between books for the beginning and the accelerated readers are all the simply written adult titles that widen the boundaries of the adolescent's thinking, that enrich his life, and help him fulfill his recreational and emotional needs.

When a collection of books is set up for young adults, readable books will be found in many fields, but the book selector should not attempt to balance the collection or to be sure all fields of reading are covered. Where there is no interest in sculpturing, agriculture, whales, termites, etc., there is little to be gained in searching widely for books on such subjects. To build up interest in anything, it is essential to begin with a readable, engaging book, and until one is available, the scholarly, didactic, or dull book will do little good.

Nor should books be bought to impress "the visiting librarian." Some books are well-written literary and seem charming to adults but are of little interest to young people; i.e., reminiscences of childhood, the soothing effect of nature, etc. This type of book reflects the interest of the librarian, rather than his readers. They look good on the shelves, and there they stay.

When the demand for books on any subject has been fairly met, new books in the field can be rejected if a wiser use can be made of the book fund. At all times, a new book must be measured against other books available to determine what purchase seems wisest in view of the needs of young people and the funds on hand. On the other hand, there are certain titles so useful and rich in content that it is better to duplicate them than to buy an inferior new book that is similar to it.

There are few perfect books for young adult collections. For like our friends, books mix virtues with faults. The librarian's problem is not to search for books that have nothing the matter with them, but to hunt the best available, and when virtues far outweigh faults, to buy titles despite their imperfections. We deplore the use of profanity or certain frank passages dealing with sex. But when a book opens up a clearer vision of life or develops understanding of other people or breaks down intolerance, we must weigh these faults against the possible harm to be done by some regrettable word or passage in the book, particularly where taste rather than morals is offended.

It is easy to make of our own limitation standards for selection. Our aversion to the unpleasant or the realistic, our prejudices, our limited experiences, may keep us from seeing a book in true perspective. Above all, we sometimes feel so strongly about some things that before we read a book we make up our minds that if such and such occurs, the book will be rejected. Each book should stand or fall on its own merits. No measuring stick can be prepared ahead of time. In this connection, a prominent psychiatrist once said that one of the greatest disservices we can render young adults is to put in their hands books that give them the idea that marriage is the answer to all problems—that the bride and groom sail from the altar on a pink cloud of romance and live happily ever after. Many psychiatrists hold that a few books presenting a more realistic picture of the difficulties of adjustment and of all the self control and character and courage needed to make a marriage a success would prepare young people for an experience they would understand better.

Selecting books for young people is not easy, for our teen-agers mature much faster than in former years and are constantly making new and greater demands on their readers' advisors. No one who works with adolescents can ever feel that he has read enough books or knows enough to do for his readers what he would like to do. For some we do nothing; others we at least teach to love and read books. For a few we open up the whole world of ideas in books, and most of this has to be done on faith. We get just enough positive proof of the results of our efforts to know that we have a part in something big.

Book Selection in a College Library

by SARAH D. JONES, Librarian, Goucher College

The selection of books for a college or university library is inevitably controlled by the purposes of the institution which the library serves. The primary function of the library is to support the courses of instruction. How far beyond this primary duty the library can go—to what extent it can provide materials for faculty research, or support independent work by its students, or offer representative books in areas of knowledge not included in the curriculum, or add to its shelves the current fiction however high on “best seller lists” or in critical acclaim—all these are given direction by the purposes of the institution and are held within bounds by the hard and inescapable reality of the book budget.

A library in a college that is supported and controlled by a religious denomination will build a book collection different in emphasis from the collection of a non-sectarian college because the emphasis of the instruction will be different. A university must spend more of its library budget on materials for research than a college can afford to. The teachers' college library will have a greater proportion of its holdings in “education” than will a liberal arts college which offers to its students “education” as but one possible major among a choice of twenty or more. Even the four-year, undergraduate, non-sectarian, liberal arts college for men will probably have a different library from a similar college for women; and indeed, the libraries of the women's colleges will differ with the character of the institution. Not only do course offerings affect library purchases, but also the methods of teaching employed by the faculty influence the demands on the library. The nearness and kinds of other libraries will also have a bearing upon book selection.

Within the lines of direction set by the institution and the confines of the budget, book selection is still a juggling act. The librarian must weigh the claims of the departments of instruction for a greater or less proportion of the available funds, taking into account the varying costs of books and periodicals, the dependence of the courses upon the library, the rate of obsolescence of books, and the numbers of students and faculty. Then there are the claims of the “general” and reference collections, which also must be assessed. Once the proportions of expenditure are established in broad outlines, selection can in an orderly fashion build toward a balanced whole.

Few college libraries have the staff either large enough or specialized enough not only to search but also to make judgments upon the book reviews appearing in all the fields in which the library purchases. But at hand are the specialists in the fields of knowledge with which the college is concerned. The faculty know their own journals, and in reading the book reviews, become the first selectors. Some, over-eager, have to be restrained; others may have to be prodded; the librarian must keep the process moving in balance. To the members of the faculty can be sent marked catalogues and price lists, announcements of publications, and notices of book reviews that members of the library staff have picked up in the course of their professional reading. From the faculty, persuaded of the cooperation of the library, will come the welcome advice to purchase or not to purchase. Advice of the faculty is the only element in book selection for a college library that differs essentially from procedures of selection in other libraries. Beyond this, the library staff relies upon the reputation and qualifications of the author, the quality of the book review, the demand which must be met, and, retrospectively, the historical importance of the book.

Leaving the generalities, I shall reflect in the rest of this article the specific tools and methods which in general have been found most useful by the Goucher College

Library staff. The problem is three-fold: to keep up with current publications, to rectify omissions as they became apparent, and to survey the book collection for gaps or "dead wood" that have developed with a changing curriculum and the progress of knowledge.

Every mail brings a flood of advertisements from publishers and book sellers. Probably nine-tenths are promptly thrown away, but culled from the last tenth, the booksellers' catalogues are compared with the library's want list and the notices of new publications may be marked for purchase or sorted and sent to the members of the faculty who are probably interested in the book. If the advertisements are the first line of attack upon the problem of selecting current publications, the second is *Publishers' Weekly*, which should be scanned regularly by the staff. The *New York Times Book Review* is as important to a college library as it is to a public library; but in addition, the *London Times Literary Supplement* is particularly valuable in its description and critical judgment of books given no or scant attention in the American tools. The short reviews in the *Library Journal* are useful as both book notice and quick evaluation. The list of new reference books in the *Wilson Library Bulletin* occasionally yields an item needed by the college library; and from the *Information Bulletin* of the Library of Congress the selector may receive first notice of an important reference book that he might otherwise find listed in a retrospective bibliography months later. Indispensable are the annual lists of new magazines and new reference books in *College and Research Libraries*.

The selection of foreign language titles is somewhat troublesome, but the specialized knowledge of the faculty is at hand to help; at Goucher we make no effort to purchase in languages other than those taught at the college. The *Stechert-Hafner Book News* usually lists foreign works too specialized for the undergraduate library, but notice of an important set or reference book needed by the college can occasionally be picked up from its pages. The changing patterns of publishing have resulted in the purchase of more and more university press books by college libraries, and the monthly list sent out by the American Association of University Presses is small but important.

The second part of book selection, the constant revision of the existing collection whether by rectifying individual omissions or by a formal survey, can also be done by the initiative of the library staff and the cooperation of the faculty. Weeding is comparatively simple, for one has the existing collection from which to work. Filling in gaps is another matter: individual gaps may be discovered by those trying to find information; in a concentrated effort to build or devise the collection in a given field, a bibliographical measuring stick or point of departure makes the job easier. Such a general aid was the old *List of Books for College Libraries*, edited by Charles B. Shaw, frequently used by college librarians as a guide rather than as a final authority. The recent *Catalogue of the Lamont Library* can be made the primary tool in reviewing the book collection, but one must bear in mind the adaptations necessary to the particular library one reviews. Beyonds these are the innumerable specialized bibliographies.

Throughout the whole process of book selection, no set procedures can take the place of the communication and cooperation of an alert and informed staff and an alert and informed faculty.



Bibliography

"LIBRARIANS AND THE FREEDOM TO KNOW" DISCUSSION GROUP

From March 12-May 21, 1956 a series of meetings was held under the Discussion Group Committee of M.L.A. on "Librarians and the Freedom to Know." Mrs. Marion E. Hawes was then chairman of the Committee. A valuable by-product of those meetings was a reading list covering general principles of book selection, censorship, freedom and libraries, including a section related to schools. Reprinted below is a selection from that list of titles which, the Committee feels, "all librarians should know."

Becker, Carl L. FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE. 1955. Vintage book, Knopf, 95¢.

Biddle, Francis. THE FEAR OF FREEDOM. 1951. Doubleday, \$3.50.

"A discussion of the contemporary obsession of anxiety and fear in the United States; its historical background and present expression, and its effect on national security and on free American institutions."

Blanshard, Paul. THE RIGHT TO READ; the battle against censorship. 1955. Beacon, \$3:50.

Various types of censorship in the United States, with specific cases.

Daniels, Walter M., ed. THE CENSORSHIP OF BOOKS. *The Reference Shelf*, Vol. 26, No. 5, 1954. \$1.75.

Excellent coverage of general problem, forms of censorship, with special sections on textbooks and librarians.

Jones, Howard Mumford, ed. PRIMER OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM. 1949. Harvard University Press, \$2.75.

Excellent selection of notable documents and statements from Bacon to the present.

Rutland, Robert Allen. THE BIRTH OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS 1776-1791. 1955. Published for Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press.

Stocker, Joseph. "Freedom's Frightened People." In LIBRARY JOURNAL, 81:318-325, February 1, 1956.

The anti-democratic approach to anti-communism.

Relation to Libraries

American Library Association. FREEDOM OF BOOK SELECTION, edited by Fredric J. Mosher, 1954. (Proceedings of the Second Conference on Intellectual Freedom, Whittier, Calif., June 20-21, 1953). \$3.50.

Sections of areas of controversy and responsibility of choice especially pertinent.

American Library Association. FREEDOM OF COMMUNICATION, edited by William Dix and Paul Bixler, 1954. (Proceedings of the First Conference on Intellectual Freedom, New York City, June 28-29, 1952). \$4.00.

American Library Association. A.L.A. BULLETIN, 47:450-493, November 1953. Intellectual Freedom Issue.

Includes articles on general principles; the problem in different types of libraries; a collection of statements of policy and principles by various professional groups and an excellent reading list.

American Library Association, Public Libraries Division. *THE PLD REPORTER*, Number 4, October 1955. "Book Selection: Proceedings of a Work Conference." \$2.50

"Objectives of the Public Library," by Miriam Putnam and excerpts from public library book selection statements useful in setting up policies.

Cory, John. "The Attack on Books and Libraries" (New York Library Public Relations Council meeting). In *WILSON LIBRARY BULLETIN*, 27:807-812, June 1953.

Especially Cory's outline of types of censorship and materials subject to it.

EXTENDING THE FRONTIERS OF FREEDOM; the role of the public library. A pamphlet study guide cooperatively sponsored by Young Women's Christian Association, United Church Women, National Council of Negro Women, and National Council of Jewish Women.

Farmer, Arthur E. "Pressure-group Censorship—and How to Fight It." In *A.L.A. BULLETIN*, 42:356-362, September 1, 1948.

A former legal counsel on book censorship problems gives practical suggestions.

Fearnside, W. W. "Thoughts about the Integrity of a Library." In *WILSON LIBRARY BULLETIN*, 30:239-243, November 1955.

Five arguments on censorship with answers.

Relation to Education

American Association of School Librarians. *SCHOOL LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*. (reprint)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Education Association. *FORCES AFFECTING AMERICAN EDUCATION*. 1953 Yearbook. Ch. 3—"Groups Affecting Education," by Robert A. Skaife, p. 43 ff. Ch. 4—"Communication Affecting Education," by Harold Benjamin, p. 87 ff.

National Council for the Social Studies, Committee on Intellectual Freedom. "The Treatment of Controversial Issues in the Schools." In *SOCIAL EDUCATION*, 15:232-236, May 1951. (reprints) Excellent list of criteria.

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL AND THE AMERICAN HERITAGE.

A statement on freedom to learn approved by the American Association of School Administrators, A.L.A., Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, American Textbook Publishers Institute, and several N.E.A. departments. (reprints)

Rogers, Virgil M. "Textbooks under Fire." In *ATLANTIC*, 195:42-48. February 1955.

Skaife, Robert A. "The Conflict Continues." In *NATION'S SCHOOLS*, 53:1-5, March 1954. (reprints)

Current attacks, their source and strategies.

"The Textbook in America: a Symposium." In *SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE*, 35:13-65, April 19, 1952.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Prince George's County Library Administrator

Miss Elizabeth B. Hage, recently appointed County Library Administrator of Prince George's County Memorial Library, assumed her duties February 4th. She fills the vacancy left by Mrs. Mary Kenan Hadley, whose husband has accepted a position in New England.

Miss Hage is well qualified for the role of County Librarian through experience as County Library Administrator of the Scott County (Iowa) Library for the past seven years. A native of Minnesota, she received her B.A. at Carleton College, Minnesota and her Master's in Library Science at the University of Wisconsin. Before her appointment to the Scott County Library, Miss Hage had twelve years of experience in county and state library work in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

A Plea For The New Reference Services Division of A.L.A.

Among the newly established A.L.A. divisions, one which should mean much to librarians in the state is the Reference Services Division. It is concerned with the informational, bibliographical, and research services of the library at all levels, and its activities are being planned to extend, in a very practical way, to all of us in our individual libraries. There will be a chance for all librarians interested in these services to pool their ideas and knowledge and work together. For example, school librarians and public library reference librarians have many mutual problems in giving service to students, and here is an opportunity to work out these problems together. The constitution provides for regional and local chapters and the Division's activities will by no means be confined to annual A.L.A. conventions.

With the new provision for membership in both a "type-of-library" and a "type-of-activity" division, without payment of additional dues, and for membership in additional divisions of either type for only \$2.00 each, many librarians will be pleased with the wide choice available in the functional divisions. Will all members of M.L.A. who have not already paid their A.L.A. dues and indicated divisional affiliation, consider themselves most cordially invited to join the Reference Services Division, which we feel has a bright and productive future ahead?

—Mary N. Barton, Chairman, R.S.D.,
Interim Membership Committee
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